

581 *Hynniew Trep Hynniew Skum* (the seven nests,
[773] seven roots), These seven nests or roots were
seven pairs of virgin women and men created by
God to marry and they formed seven houses
(families) and from them the country was filled
and the rites and ceremonies were obtained. Thus the
Khasi takes pride in the fact that God Himself deli-
vered their religion and the rites and ceremonies
unto them. ... The Khasi matrilineal system
has come down through ages and with a definite
idea of the union of one man with one woman.
This is significant for those who consider that
marriage is and has always been common to the
whole human race, and it raises the question as
to whether the Khasi idea is the survival of a
period when the nature of paternity was not
understood".

- [851] In the sacred rites of baptism of this simple folk
[603] we find that a Khasi grandmother will not officiate
[553] in the name-giving ceremony unless in the marriage
of her son with the woman to whom the child is
born there has been the regular ceremony of
marriage.
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178 no polygynists, though there were many personal temporary illicit
184 relations or love affairs.

595 It is true that even in interior villages polygyny is rapidly decreasing. In the two villages I found only two cases of polygyny: a man with two wives in Sohkynduh (Josio in List 6, whose wives are 26 and 32), and a man with three wives in Kongton (Jubongrai in List 9, whose wives are 8, 20 and 52). These cases appeared clearly as cases of polygyny which the villagers recognized as such, speaking of them quite differently from the way they would have spoken of lovers, calling them wives and husbands. Of course, the first wife socially outranks the secondary wives, as *ka tynga trai*, and the term *ka tynga tuh* is used for the latter, as Gurdon states (1914, p. 80). The difference being that the first wife has a legal marriage ceremony while the others have not—*ka tynga tuh* means literally 'stolen wife.' About
585 the marriage ceremony, Gurdon gives a detailed description (*ibid.*,
595 pp. 127-130) and says there are three forms of marriage ceremonies, *Pynhiarsynjat*, *Lamdoh* and *Iadih-hiad*. The first and second forms are considered the more respectable; the last one is resorted to by the very poor who cannot afford the greater expense entailed by the first two. Unfortunately, during my stay in these villages, no marriage ceremony took place, but villagers described to me what seems to be the *Iadih-hiad*, where only a fowl is sacrificed, and the whole procedure is much simpler than that described by Gurdon. However, whatever the complexity and richness may be, there is a distinct line between having a ceremony and not having it, and this draws the distinction between the status of the first wife and that of the secondary wives.

428 Nevertheless, this distinction has more of a social bearing than the
595 legal bearing it has in a patrilineal system. Since they follow the
851 matrilineal system, the legal distinction between the first wife and the secondary wife does not affect their children's status and their property rights, at least not in the villages where I worked. The children's social locus is determined by their mother. The children (particularly the youngest daughter) have the right to inherit their father's acquired property which is automatically under their mother's ownership. If the polygynist father has acquired property by working their mother's field, or in trading on behalf of their mother, whether she be the first wife or the second, this property undoubtedly belongs to the children of that wife, not to the first wife alone. The father's physical locus at the time of his economic realisations is the decisive factor.

591 The Khasi polygynist, without bringing his wives into one house-
595 hold, alternates his residence among them, in turn or according to his temper. This practice is similar to that of the Trukese described by Goodenough (1951, p. 123), and quite different from that of the Garo

182 Because of the firm right of women over the residence, Khasi poly-
 595 gyny can never be a clearly distinguishable institution, and has no
 operational advantage in the social and economic fields; the situation
 is very similar with lovers' relations and illegal marriages. By polygyny
 the man achieves no additional economic advantage, nor does he
 increase his social status or prestige; rather the reverse, for I observed
 that the polygynist was regarded as a somewhat ludicrous or tragic
 figure. As for the woman, she is placed slightly at a disadvantage
 since the husband's economic activities are not concentrated on her
 household. However, even many legally-married wives are separated
 or divorced, so that such disadvantages are not only experienced by
 the wives of polygynists. The social disadvantage of being secondary
 wife is not serious, firstly, because wives, whether first or secondary,
 have social and economic independence—they do not belong to the
 husband as in the case of patrilineal systems. Secondly, the signifi-
 cance attached to the legal marriage institution is not so great, so that
 the handicap of being the secondary wife is not severe. What is most
 important, furthermore, is that her slightly inferior status does in
 no ways affect the next generation. Indeed such children, including
 [848] those of premarital or illegal relations, suffer no serious social dis-
 • [851] advantage, though they are nominally distinguishable from legitimate
 children. From this it is clear that the effectiveness of legitimate mar-
 riage, and paternal recognition are rather limited among the Khasi.

Thus, Khasi polygyny differs greatly from the polygyny of other
 societies in terms of its operation and of its form. It also differs
 in the incentive to its practice. Among the Garo and many other
 societies, the practice of polygyny usually depends on a man's economic
 capability, but among the Khasi, it appears rather to depend on his
 182 whim. Khasi husbands are notorious for their heavy drinking and
 593 neglect of wife and children. Some of them told me that their earnings,
 793 their children and everything they acquired go to their wife or sister,
 leaving them with nothing; therefore they should at least have freedom
 to enjoy their life. This freedom seemed to mean women and drink.
 I am not sure how far this explanation is true, but it seems to justify
 their behaviour to a certain extent. I do not mean that this is the
 general characteristic of the Khasi husbands, but some such tendency
 is to be observed. Actually I often heard wives complain of their
 husbands' drinking and running after women, and was asked "Are
 your Japanese husbands also like that?", "What is the good of having
 a husband!" then comes divorce . . .

182 On the contrary, women placed at an advantage by residence
 562 and matrilineal inheritance, are required always to be on their best
 593 behaviour. There are very strict rules governing the behaviour of
 Khasi women. They are supposed not to drink, smoke, or play with